National Water Quality Monitoring Council

Working together for clean water

NWQMC Webinar Series

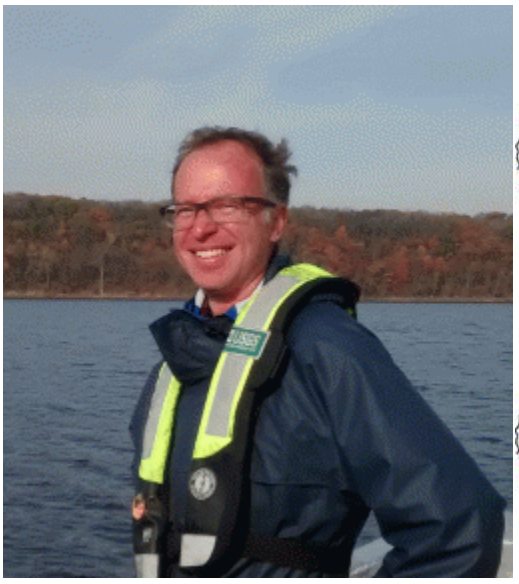
Water Quality Evolution

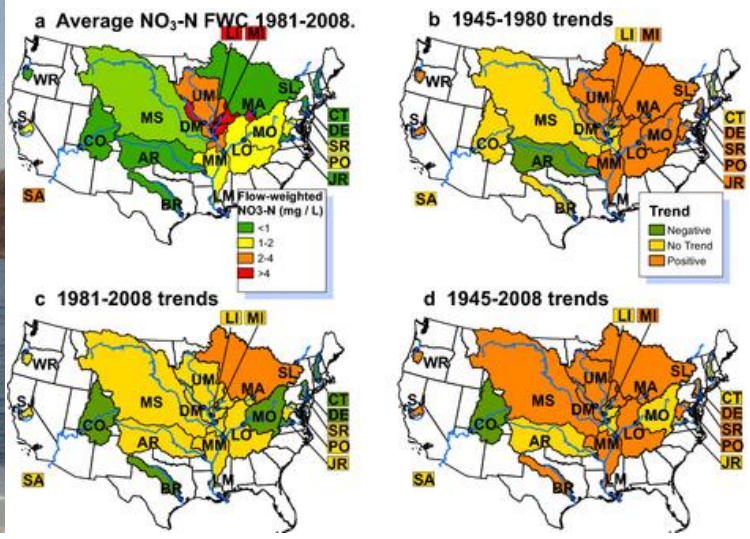
from industrialization to the age of the internet

Presented by

Ted Stets, U.S. Geological Survey

Tuesday, January 19, 2016, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. EST





Levels of water pollution in U.S. rivers and streams have evolved over time in response to changes in anthropogenic stressors, water-quality regulation, and societal needs. This talk will focus on trends in nitrate and indicators of river acidification from the late 19th century to the present in the context of distinct periods of development in the U.S. Efforts to improve water quality in the U.S. began in the late 19th century and focused on eliminating water-borne illnesses. This decades-long effort was accomplished through drinking water treatment and was highly successful. However, by the mid-20th century, accelerating water usage led to greater degradation and more diverse water quality problems. Meanwhile, the Nation experienced a new appreciation of the value of water for ecological uses, recreation, and re-use as a means of securing water supply. Growing environmental problems during the mid-20th century are evident in water quality records from that time period, illustrated by increasing nutrient concentrations and acidification of rivers. The accelerating degradation spurred legislative responses that culminated in passage of the Clean Water Act in 1973. Implementation of the Clean Water Act and other environmental laws led to observable improvements in water quality for some pollutants while others continued to get worse. But managing watersheds affected primarily by nonpoint source pollution has proven to be especially difficult. Updates to the Clean Water Act in 1987 added authority to regulate stormwater and provided mechanisms for improving management of nonpoint-source runoff. Following the large increases in nutrients during the middle 20th century, recent trends have been much smaller in magnitude and present a mixed picture of the success of efforts to improve water quality.

The webinar is *free*; **pre-registration is required**. *Please login 10 minutes early.*

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Once you are approved by the host, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining the session.